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ABSTRACT

Focusing upon Clinton County, New York and the numerous programs sponsored by the New York State Rural Development Advisory Council in conjunction with the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Cornell) via Rural Development Act Title V funds, this publication describes January 1974 through June 1976 program development in terms of county needs, program action, and program progress. The County's needs and the resulting programs addressed here include: (1) a basic skills education project to increase job opportunities (Higher Education Living Learning Opportunity); (2) inadequate housing (a project to assist residents in upgrading housing via an educational program); (3) a means by which rural people can make marginal additions to their income (development of Clinton County Farmers Market); (4) lack of a Clinton County resource inventory for development decision making (development of maps, overlays, and related natural resource data for all constituent towns); (5) community development centers to provide services and amenities to rural communities (development of a management training program, a skills index for job placement, and agency outreach days); (6) information regarding service access patterns (initiation of a crossroads survey); (7) information re the interrelationships of natural resource development (initiation of a study of 25 economic sectors in order to assess the interrelationships of major U.S. economic sectors). (JC)

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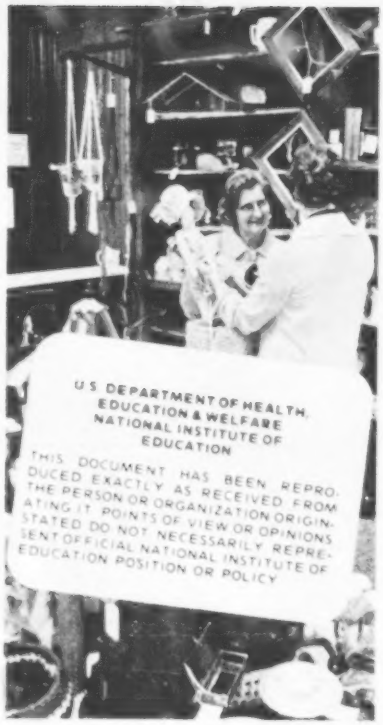

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Rural Development

A Pilot Project in Clinton County, New York

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A STATUTORY COLLEGE OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, NEW YORK

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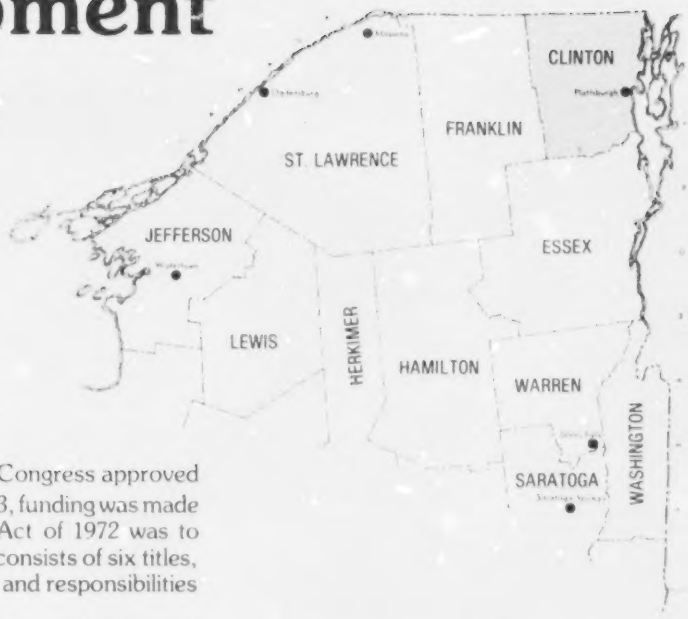


Background

In the summer of 1972, Congress approved the Rural Development Act of 1972; and in December 1973, funding was made available. The basic thrust of the Rural Development Act of 1972 was to facilitate the development of rural communities. The Act consists of six titles, each of which expanded and strengthened the authorities and responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture.

Title V is the research and education component of the Rural Development Act of 1972. It is built on the research, extension, and community service ability of public and private institutions of higher education in each state to provide scientific inquiry and education backup for rural development, and to develop and disseminate scientific information, technical assistance, and feasibility studies to improve the rural development capabilities of local citizens. The New York State Rural Development Advisory Council in conjunction with the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University chose to concentrate its rural development Title V funds from January 1974 through June 1976 in one county, Clinton, in the northeastern corner of the state.

Project Overview

Major focus of the program in Clinton County has been provided by a local steering committee. Inadequate housing, high unemployment and underemployment, and poor to nonexistent service delivery systems have been documented as crucial problems in the isolated rural area.

All research and educational projects undertaken in the county related directly to one of these three problem areas. Nearly half the rural development funds were spent to initiate applied research work in the areas of access to services, increased employment and family income, and housing education and rehabilitation.

The other half of the funds were used to support the extension educational projects in the same problem areas. For the most part, these projects were conducted by staff of the educational institutions with active programs in Clinton County—Clinton Community College, Clinton County Cooperative Extension, Cornell University through its New York State Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Human Ecology, Miner Institute, and State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

The Rural Development Project has served as a catalyst in stimulating complementary community service efforts on the part of local institutions, agencies, and volunteer organizations.

The problems of concern identified in Clinton County are common to many areas of New York. The continuing project programs, activities, and related research efforts will be applicable in northern New York and the Southern Tier regions of the state.

Project "Hello"

Situation

A *Basic Skills Education Project* was developed and initiated to increase the ability of people within the target audience in Clinton County to compete for already scarce jobs or prepare themselves for opportunities outside the area.

Many rural areas in Clinton County lack the opportunities for individuals either to improve themselves educationally or to find out about vocation or employment services available. As is true in most regions, educational and vocational training and vocational and employment counseling are available primarily in the larger population centers. Most organizations have not developed any mechanism for reaching those persons, not of public school age, living in isolated rural areas. As a result these people either do not know what assistance is available to them or live too far away to be able to take advantage of existing opportunities.

Program and Action

Clinton Community College initiated Project HELLO (Higher Education Living Learning Opportunity) in late 1974. A project director was hired; he sought to move the program from the drawing board to reality as quickly as possible. Numerous community agencies were contacted for their help in determining what specific activities might be undertaken and how the program would be carried out. The purpose of Project HELLO was to bring adult education and counseling programs and services to county residents who were unable to travel to localities where such programs were available. The major program objective was to educationally and vocationally (career counseling) develop individuals into marketable products capable of placing themselves successfully in employment positions.

The project offered two major programs:

A High School Equivalency Examination Preparation Program - 12 weeks of instruction designed to prepare an individual who does not have a high school diploma to take and pass the New York State High School Equivalency Examination. Instruction is provided in math, English, science, social studies, and reading.

A Career Counseling Program - 12 weeks of counseling designed to help an individual identify and understand his or her job interests and abilities and the jobs related to this information. Counseling is provided in personal (self) understanding, job understanding, job locating, and obtaining and maintaining skills.

Benefits to Participants

- An opportunity for personal growth in many educational and vocational areas
- Informal, personal instruction and counseling
- Learning center in own community
- Low cost to participants
- Little travel
- Participants decide what to study and for how long
- Programs designed to fit participants' daily schedules
- Contacts with many other community services through the counselor

Classes and counseling were held on an outreach basis in far corners of the county in community development centers, town halls, and church basements.

The project was "advertised" basically by a mimeograph given to individuals in stores, churches, and post offices and through word-of-mouth.

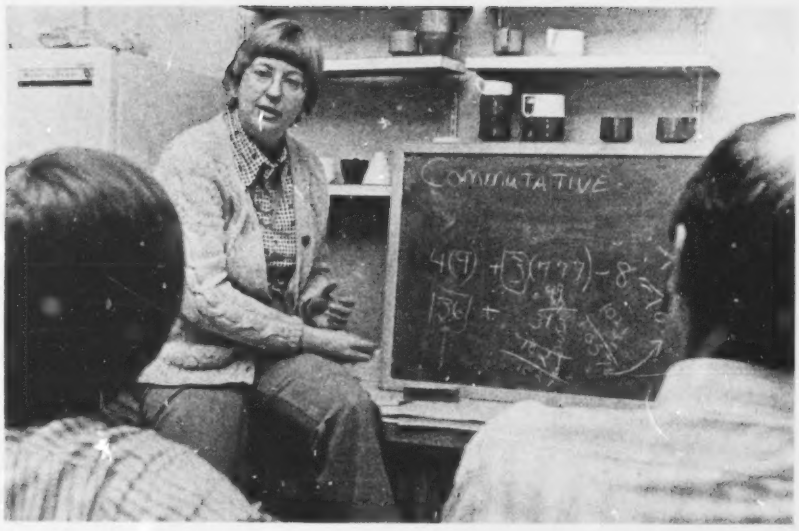
Progress

During an 18-month period, Project HELLO worked with a total of 262 people, often on an individual basis. Many were 30 years of age or older with a high number being women.

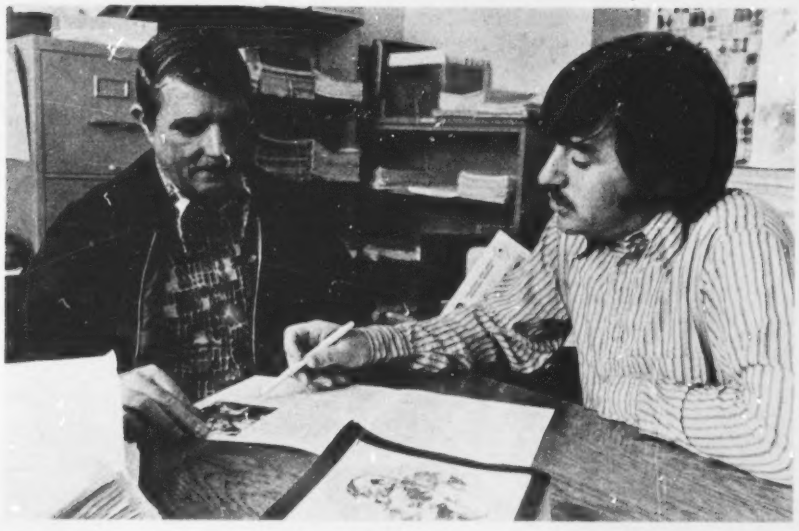
Of those participating in the High School Equivalency Program, more than 42 percent passed the exam.

A total of 99 have been involved in the career counseling program. Many of these have been women seeking to enter the job market.

The project has been beneficial to the participant and has, in many instances, benefited the participant's family.



In small, informal classes more than 160 people worked toward high school diplomas.



Individual counselling matched participants' skill with job opportunities in the region.

Learning how to apply and interview for a job increased the confidence of those seeking employment.

Housing

Situation

Throughout Clinton County and the surrounding region, a shortage of low- and moderate-income housing exists. Costs of land, building, and renovating as well as cost of borrowing money have all compounded the situation.

A number of means exist to overcome or help offset housing inadequacies. These include use of good building practices, awareness and use of new techniques and materials, wise use of available resources (i.e. own labor), and energy conservation, which releases money for other maintenance.

Program and Action

The major objective of the housing program is to assist county residents in upgrading their housing through an educational program. To do this, people need: information on considerations in purchasing and financing various housing alternatives; development of skills to repair, renovate, or construct housing; and knowledge about applicable governmental regulations.

The program, under the management and supervision of Cooperative Extension, relies primarily on paraprofessional aides as the outreach persons. Various departments at Cornell University, including Design and Environmental Analysis and Agricultural Engineering, are responsible for the development of educational materials and some training of staff.

The aides conduct group classes at various centralized locations in the county and work on a one-to-one basis with the residents. When needed, aides also maintain working relations with local governments, various trade groups, and building suppliers.

Demonstrations to small groups of homeowners helped unravel the mysteries of plumbing problems.

A homeowner tries her hand at fixing a leaky faucet while the instructor supervises.

Progress

Over 300 different families have received some assistance through either individual counseling or class participation. Printed information and consultations have been made available on buying, financing, building and remodeling, plumbing, wiring, winterization, and local regulations.

Retail businesses have been very receptive to program activities and have made space available in their stores and, in some cases, requested demonstrations during business hours. Community groups have also requested demonstrations and examples of educational materials. Some of these have been local government town boards, senior citizen groups, community development center advisory boards, parent-teacher associations, and fire departments. The volunteer firemen are interested in fire safety materials about the use of electricity and firewood.

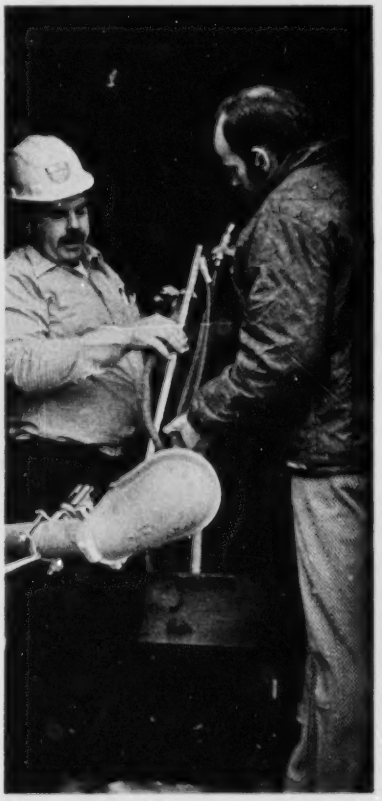
Cornell-based faculty have developed a number of educational materials, many of which have been incorporated into a notebook of "Housing Fact Sheets". These materials and models have been helpful to the aides and extension agents in conducting the program.

Program interest continues through support of local media, rural post office box mailers, a public interagency newsletter, and exhibits and demonstrations periodically staged at strategic locations around the county.

In each local community, the actual presence of a housing aide with a variety of program possibilities and the time and ability to counsel with residents remains the best way to expand participation and accomplish program goals.

An important part of properly siting a house is consideration of drainage.

On-the-job consultation, involving use of new materials and proper techniques, speeds the wiring of a new home.



A combination of know-how (from the specialist) and willingness to work (from the homeowner) will see this home through the remodeling process.

Farmers' Market

Fresh vegetables neatly displayed by a small producer entice a buyer at the farmers' market.

From participation at the farmers' market may spring permanent new businesses.

Situation

One of the first projects undertaken in Clinton County was the development of the Clinton County Farmers' Market. A farmers' market is a means by which people, primarily in rural areas, can make marginal additions to their income. Many persons have, or could have, small quantities of produce, goods, and services to sell but are not in a position to organize or develop a business on their own. Therefore, a farmers' market could provide an organized outlet for small-volume producers.

Program and Action

Cooperative Extension in Clinton County took the leadership in determining whether such a market should be organized and how best to do it.

To obtain needed information, contact was made with individuals from other markets across New York and in nearby Vermont to benefit from their experience. Local and state agencies that have jurisdiction over the operation of such markets were also consulted. Local groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, that could assist in the development and promotion of such a market, were also involved as were the media which might inform the public of the market's existence.

Local interest was determined through surveys and meetings, and a formal organization was legally established for operating the market. The purpose of the organization was to provide county residents with a retail market for locally grown or home produced goods.

The market operated in downtown Plattsburgh where customers would also have the opportunity to shop in nearby stores.

Progress

Of the 100 members who were registered with the market, approximately one-quarter actually participated in market sales.

A variety of products, goods, and services was offered at the market: produce, maple syrup, honey, baked goods, flowers, crafts, animals, and services such as knife and scissor sharpening. Additional services that could be marketed might include custom plowing, garden tilling, and firewood cutting.

The market operates one day per week during the months of July, August, and September. Sales of all products, goods, and services are highest during August, followed by July. Total gross sales average about $10,000 for the three-month operating period. Most vendors feel it is profitable for them to participate in the market.

Buyers of market goods have ranged from 500 to 1000 per market day. Buyers are county residents, plus tourists from nearby states and Canada.

Currently the "market" is in the process of expanding and locating in new facilities in the Plattsburgh downtown area. Several small businesses are being developed on a year-round basis as a spin-off from participation in the market.

Local craftspersons have the opportunity to display at the farmers' market, too.

Natural Resources

Situation

Rural development programs and alternatives are often tied to an area's natural resource base, including land, soils, and water. No resource inventory base for Clinton County has been available for integration into development decision making.

Program and Action

Clinton County was subdivided into its constituent towns. Each town's resource base was developed from existing data — soil surveys, land use natural resource inventory, and USGS maps — and then mapped several times to highlight each major environmental characteristic.

Four maps, showing land use, slope, soil, and surface drainage, were developed for each of the 14 towns. The maps were constructed so that they could be superimposed on one another to give a broad overview of the interrelationships of the various natural resources. This project was undertaken by SUNY Plattsburgh through the Institute for Man and His Environment.

Progress

The maps, overlays, and related data have been used with town planning boards and other local planning groups. The technique has also been used in working with a multicounty planning group and with the St. Regis Indian Reservations and the Tug Hill Commission. It has application to other regions in New York State.

Planners review the natural resource base study which ties together land use and capabilities.

Use of natural resource base data will guide future development in reducing congestion, drainage problems, and other environmental conflicts.

Community Development Centers

Pockets of Poverty

The goals of the Pockets of Poverty research program, undertaken at SUNY Plattsburgh's Technical Assistance Center, were to identify key socioeconomic and housing indicators of poverty and provide those data on a *city* and *town* basis. A computer program has been developed, as part of this research endeavor, to break out (on a township basis) census data for any county in the country.

The United States Bureau of the Census was chosen as the best source of available data on poverty. The Census of Population and Housing questionnaires have been tabulated, and summary tables created on computer tape.

A Pockets of Poverty Report was completed during the summer of 1975. Since that time, numerous local agencies and organizations (both public and private) have requested copies. The report has been most helpful in assisting local groups, agencies, and institutions with program planning, proposal writing, and program review and assessment.

Situation

Clinton County, as well as other northern New York counties, has established a network of community development centers. These were started at the town level in 1966 as a part of the OEO program. The centers, at one time called care centers, were intended to be a source of direct and emergency help. Center personnel have distributed clothing, fuel, and equipment; provided emergency transportation; assisted in informal counseling; organized adult education classes; and provided a variety of other services.

The centers have been, and still are, located in a wide variety of places, ranging from town halls and fire houses to church basements. The centers presently operate with federal and local (town) funds and are staffed with one full-time paraprofessional director per center. The objective of the centers continues to be that of providing services and amenities to anyone in the rural communities.

Program and Action

A variety of programs and activities have been held through the community development centers as part of the Rural Development Program.

Management Training In conjunction with the Clinton Community College, arrangements were made for a 16-week in-service training program for the community development center directors and other interested local government personnel. The program covered: decision making, problem solving, communications, management, and effective supervision. Educational materials for this program were provided by the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell as part of the local government program.

Skills Index Unemployment is a serious problem in the county. An Employment Skills Index Project was initiated and implemented with the assistance of the community development center directors. The project attempted to find employment possibilities, primarily for the unskilled, in their own communities. A cross-reference file of persons who have jobs to be done and persons searching for either full-time or part-time work was established in the centers.

Agency Outreach Days With the centralization of agency services and personnel in the city of Plattsburgh, the centers have sponsored agency outreach days. Representatives from a variety of agencies have taken advantage of this effort to extend their programs through individual counseling and program explanation to rural residents.

Local community development centers opened their doors to home repair workshops for local residents.

Progress The Rural Development Program developed a 30-minute video tape about what the centers do, the services, programs, and classes provided, and shows it to a variety of different people and groups in the county to help them visualize the functions of the centers. This effort has been instrumental in the continued funding at the local town level for the centers.

The centers have served and, it is hoped, will continue to serve as one viable method for service delivery in rural areas of Clinton County.

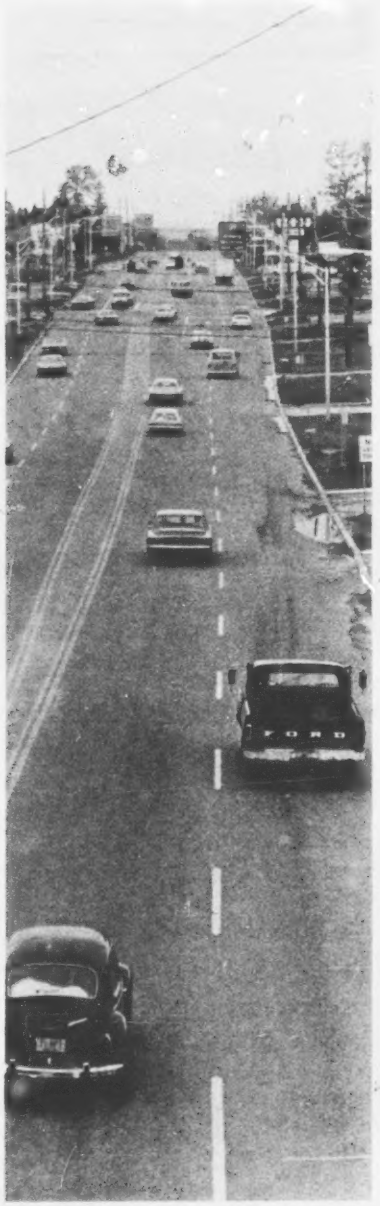
Centers are staffed by trained directors adept at finding solutions to family emergency problems.

A coordinator scans her special file matching up jobs and job seekers.

In this rural area the community development center shares the Town Hall.

Crossroads and Access to Services

Four wheels constitute the major way rural people get to commercial, public, and professional services in the county.



Situation

To maintain the quality of rural life, do you transport people to services and amenities in the central city or do you transport the services and amenities to the people on an outreach basis?

In rural areas where services, particularly public and professional, are not available, residents often have to travel some distance to obtain the needed services. The service access patterns are often not readily available to planners, community decision makers, and government personnel; thus, efforts to make services more easily accessible are not implemented. Even when such information is available, it is often in a format difficult for use and interpretation.

Program and Action

A crossroads survey was undertaken to actually determine what exists in the county and what small rural communities might be able to support in terms of health services, small businesses, and social services.

For study purposes, services and amenities were divided into two major groups: *commercial*, such as small grocery, gas station, bar, hardware store, and barber; and *public and professional*, such as church, post office, public school, doctor, lawyer, and clinic.

The field inventory process found 157 different kinds of services in 80 separate localities outside the city of Plattsburgh. A wide range of services was found in the rural communities with the more populated areas having the greatest number of services.

A part of the study was to determine through personal interviews with key informants and a general population sample where rural residents obtained necessary services. The location of services, commercial, public, and professional, was plotted on reference maps for the approximately 900 residents interviewed. These maps and related transparencies present a rather startling, but clear, pattern of rural residents and their access to services. Time and distance (mileage) traveled are of economic importance not only to rural residents, but also to agencies, organizations, and businesses trying to provide services.

Progress

The information gathered from the study is now being used to develop strategies and programs to improve the quality of life by helping agencies and institutions to expand and better distribute their services.

In the future, the study results will be useful to local leaders, such as town supervisors, county legislators, planners, and others interested in stimulating community economic development, by assisting them to meet local service needs.

Neat store fronts frame two of the businesses in a small community.

Though there usually is a general store, community size often dictates the services available.

Workshop participants learn about commuting patterns of workers in Clinton County.

Inter-Industry

Situation

Over the years, a number of studies have been conducted in Clinton County to appraise the potential for development programs in various sectors of the economy. Most of these studies were conducted to examine opportunities for exploiting the natural resource base such as agriculture, forestry, and recreation. There is a need to look at the interrelationships of the major economic sectors in the county to better plan future economic growth.

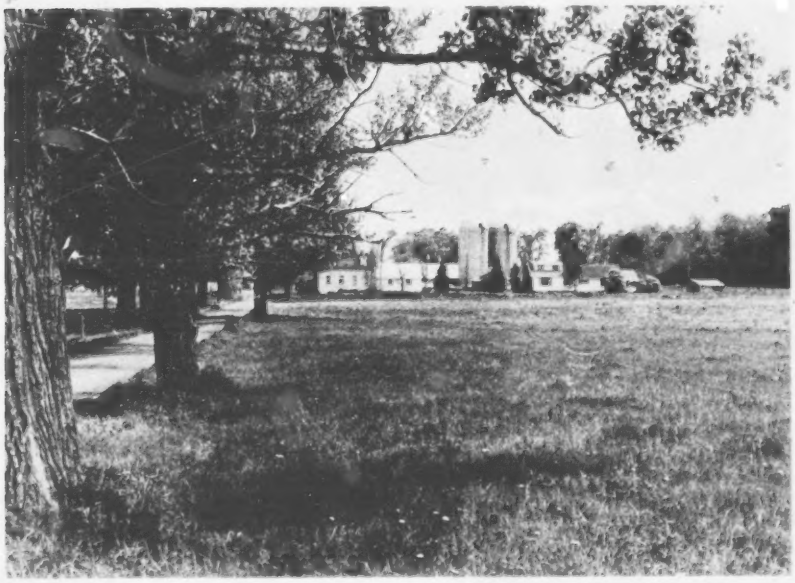
Program and Action

The economy of any region contains numerous relationships between sectors. Because of these interrelationships, a change in the economic activity in one sector affects the economic activity in other sectors. An increase in housing will increase demand for inputs into the construction process, such as labor, and building materials. Also, the income and profits generated by such activity increase the demand for other commodities, including food, clothes, and fuel.

A detailed study of the various economic sectors, a total of 25 separate sectors, was undertaken during a five-month period in 1975. Data were gathered by personal interviews throughout the county and supplemented by county and state data sources. An analysis of the study data will be helpful in considering the following economic questions:

1. Expansion of which sectors would contribute most to raising income?
2. Expansion of which industries would have the greatest impact on employment?
3. How dependent is the county upon the government sector, and what impact on employment or income would result from increases or decreases in public expenditures?
4. What would be the economic impact from expansion of selected industries such as housing, recreation, and small farm projects?

Providing answers to these questions is critical to the development efforts of Clinton County.



Agriculture continues to play an important part in the economic life of Clinton County.

Progress A number of reports will be available giving technical information on the entire study and in specific areas such as tourism, paper products, and the impact of the public sector on the county's economy.

The overview of the county's economic structure provided by the inter-industry input-output analysis will be helpful to public officials, business-persons, and others in gaining a better understanding of the county. It is hoped that the study will provide community decision makers with a valuable analytical tool for assessing the potential impact generated from public as well as private development alternatives.

Professional businesses seek new quarters from which to attract clients.

Small businesses pump life into a community's economy - providing services and job opportunities.

Manufacturers, providing a variety of job opportunities, draw personnel from all sections of the county.

Since the county is on a major north-south route, tourism looms high in the economic picture.

Looking Ahead

Through the cooperative efforts of many individuals, lay committees, institutions of higher learning, and various agencies, the rural development pilot project in Clinton County has made significant measurable progress. The major thrusts on housing, unemployment and underemployment, and access and delivery of services have resulted in cooperative efforts to solve the problems and develop workable solutions.

Many of the basic how-to concepts developed during the pilot effort are already being transferred to other communities and regions of New York State. Materials and visual aids are playing an important role in spreading the word and showing how-to.

In Clinton County, the initial projects continue to be implemented, either by local community groups or by organizations such as Cooperative Extension and local institutions of higher education. Various spin-offs have resulted in further programs and projects to meet local needs.

The important ingredient of cooperation has been the main catalyst for success — cooperation by "local institutions of all kinds working together to solve local problems." And based on this successful beginning, the impact of the project should continue for the benefit and welfare of the people in Clinton County.

Cooperative Extension, New York State College of Human Ecology and New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., and the U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. In furtherance of Acts of Congress May 8, June 30, 1914, and providing equal opportunities in employment and programs. D. L. Call, Director.

2/77 CP 1M 4706-A